DAWN

METRO South

KARACHI Friday, January 23, 2026

KARACHI

Sunset	06:10pm
Sunrise (Tomorrow)	07:16am

NEXT 24 HRS

Minimum	7°C
Maximum	20°C
Humidity	49%
Outlook	Sunny

Sri Lanka survive Overton scare to beat England in first ODI

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Six suspects shot dead in Pak Colony 'encounter'

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: Six suspected robbers were gunned down in an alleged encounter in Pak Colony on Thursday night.

South DIG Syed Asad Raza said that acting on a tip-off, a police team conducted a raid on a hideout of criminals. He said that sensing danger the criminals opened fire and police retaliated.

He said when the guns fell silent six suspects were killed and two policemen suffered bullet wounds.

The DIG identified four of the deceased as Naqeebullah, Abdul Bari, Allah Dad and Mujeebullah. "They belonged to an Afghan dacoit gang comprising nine members," he said.

He said that the suspects had killed three brothers during a house robbery in the Haroonabad area a couple of months ago.

He said the killed suspects had past criminal record as there were multiple FIRs registered against them.

The police claimed to have recovered five pistols and one rifle from their custody.

Meanwhile, Sindh Home Minister Zia Lanjar praised the police for the action and vowed to continue action against criminal elements.

He asked the authorities to ensure best medical treatment for wounded policemen.

In another incident, a suspected robber allegedly involved in the killing of a police officer was gunned down in an encounter in Malir City on Thursday, police said.

The deceased was identified as Mohammed Jaffer alias Bobbi. He was booked in a case pertaining to the murder of police officer Khan Mohammed Abro.

THE use of heavy machinery for debris removal has sparked fears of desecration of the remains of Gul Plaza fire victims.—Shakil Adil / White Star

Gul Plaza fire death toll rises to 67 as search continues for sixth day

• Officials say 15 victims identified so far; remains of as many deemed 'unidentifiable' • Families protest slow pace of search operation • Flower shop owner's negligence blamed for devastating fire • Only 200 of 1,200 shops had fire extinguishers, meeting told

By Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: The death toll in the Gul Plaza fire tragedy rose to 67 on Thursday as remains of six more victims were found in the rubble during a search operation that continued for the sixth day.

South DIG Syed Asad Raza told *Dawn* that 15 of the 67 bodies had been identified.

Police surgeon Dr Summaiya Syed on Thursday issued a list of 67 victims whose bodies had been brought to the Civil Hospital Karachi since January 17.

She told *Dawn* that six bodies were identified with the help of their facial features, eight through DNA testing and one with the help of his computerised national identity card.

She said that the DNA matching of 37 victims was in process. She said that it would be difficult to identify 15 bodies because DNA extraction was not possible.

A team of the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) also visited the plaza. The SBCA team believed that they would demolish the building after completion of the search operation.

Thermal imaging cameras used in search operation

Rescue 1122 spokesperson Hassaan Ul Haseeb Khan told *Dawn* that urban search and rescue teams were conducting the search operation with the help of thermal imaging cameras (TICs).

"Urban search and rescue teams are working at the incident site and using specialised tools and cutters," he said.

He said the TIC can detect heat up to 1,500 degrees Celsius. However, the heat inside the building was higher, affecting the remains of the victims.

The spokesperson said they had never experienced such a fire incident in the metropolis in recent times. Despite continued cooling work over the last three days, extreme heat still persisted inside the debris. However, he said they continued to remove debris.

The spokesperson said the structure of the building was dilapidated, so extreme caution was being exercised during the search operation.

He added that there was no way to move inside the building. The rescue workers created confined spaces by cutting the wall, but the action triggered "vibration". Therefore, the work, which should have been completed within 10-20 minutes, took one to two hours to finish, he said.

'Fire caused by flower shop owner's negligence'

Sources familiar with the preliminary findings of a committee tasked with investigating the devastating fire told *Dawn* that the blaze started from a shop selling artificial flowers on the ground floor due to the alleged

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Rains, strong winds turn weather chillier in Karachi

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The city saw its second spell of winter showers on Thursday afternoon under the influence of a westerly wave that brought about light to moderate rainfall in several areas.

After the rains, strong winds blew through the city and made the weather chillier.

According to the Met Department advisory, Surjani Town recorded the highest rainfall at 26.3mm, followed by North Karachi (20mm) and Gulshan-i-Maymar (17.6mm). Bahria Town Phase V received 14.2mm, while Saadi Town recorded 10mm. Rainfall in Nazimabad (Paposh Nagar) measured 6.5mm and 4mm in Korangi.

Gulshan-i-Hadeed and PAF Masroor Base each recorded 3mm, followed by PAF Faisal Base with 2mm.

Lighter rainfall was observed on University Road (Met Complex) at 1.2mm, DHA Phase II at 1mm and Jinnah Terminal at 0.2mm. Trace rain was recorded in the old airport area and Keamari.

"There are no chances of more rain as the westerly wave has almost passed away. However, the cold wave is expected to persist for a few days," said Chief Meteorologist Ameer Hyder Laghari, adding that the temperature would drop to a single digit in Karachi.

According to the department's forecast, dry weather with cold nights is expected over the next two days with the minimum temperature dropping from 13.5 degrees Celsius (recorded on Wednesday night) to seven to nine degrees Celsius.

Humidity levels are expected to drop from 84 per cent recorded on Thursday morning to 40-55pc and 54pc to 15-25pc in the morning and evening, respectively.

The maximum temperature dropped from 27.1 to 26 degrees Celsius.

Man shot dead by robbers in North Karachi

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: A man was shot dead and a passer-by wounded by robbers in North Karachi on Thursday, police said.

The Khawaja Ajmer Nagri police said that Mohammed Askari, 25, was shot and killed during a robbery near Fayyazi Hospital while a passerby, Amjad Ajmal, was wounded.

Two robbers riding a motorcycle had attempted to loot Askari but as he put up resistance, they opened fire and fled without any loot.

A police officer said that it appeared to be a robbery-related incident but they were also probing it from other angles.

The body and the wounded were shifted to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital.

Meanwhile, a suspected robber was shot dead and another arrested in wounded condition after an encounter at Parking Plaza in Saddar on Thursday evening.

Brigade SHO Faisal Gul Khawaja said two suspects were looting passers-by when a police patrol arrived there and challenged them. The suspects resorted to firing and in an ensuing encounter suspect Asghar was killed and his accomplice Sohail was wounded and arrested.

Concerned over rise in HIV cases, PMA calls for action against quacks, unregistered blood banks

Association demands investigation into Sindh AIDS Control Programme's affairs

By Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: The Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) has issued a "high-level alert" regarding what the organisation described as a disastrous rise in HIV cases among children in Sindh, while demanding strict enforcement of infection control practices and action against illegal clinics and unregistered blood banks.

According to the organisation, the total registered number of HIV-positive children has climbed up to 3,995 in the province with over 100 new cases reported in Karachi in 2025 alone.

"This is no longer just a medical crisis — it is a brewing socio-economic catastrophe. The impact of this outbreak extends far beyond the hospital, threatening the very fabric of society. Families are being pushed into extreme poverty due to lifelong treatment costs and loss of parental income, creating a permanent cycle of debt," the association regretted.

Social stigma, it pointed out, remained a major barrier, with reports of children being denied school admissions and families being "dehumanised which further drives the epidemic underground".

It questioned the competence of the Sindh AIDS Control Programme (SACP) and the health department, noting that despite the 2019 Ratodero tragedy, infection control remained non-existent.

"What is the role of these institutions? We demand an immediate, transparent audit of SACP and all bodies responsible for HIV control. The government must explain why billions in resources and years of international support have failed to prevent our children from being infected in healthcare settings.

'Marginalised youth'

The PMA warned that Pakistan's current trajectory risks a generation of marginalised youth who will become a permanent burden on the state's economy.

The PMA called on the government of Sindh and federal authorities to take strict measures to address the root causes of HIV transmission. These steps, it said, must include an immediate investigation into the SACP regarding the millions of funding gap and the stagnation of the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) and enforcement of stringent new laws against quackery.

"There is an immediate need for a province-wide crackdown and monitoring system for hair salons and barbers to ensure the total ban on reusing blades and the mandatory use of sterilised equipment. The government should also initiate criminal proceedings against those individuals and facility owners whose negligence or illegal practices led to the spread of this deadly disease."

It also demanded full implementation of Sindh HIV and AIDS Control Treatment and Protection Act to end discrimination in schools and workplaces and strict regulation of hospital waste disposal and a zero-tolerance policy on the reuse of syringes.

"Pakistan has the second-fastest-growing HIV epidemic in the Asia-Pacific region," the PMA stated. "Silence and administrative apathy are no longer options. Those responsible for this negligence must be held accountable. If the government does not act today, the social and economic cost tomorrow will be too high."

First phase of Karachi Safe City Project to be launched in two months

Initial phase covers 'Red Zone' and airport corridor; South, East, Korangi and Malir districts to be included in subsequent phases

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: While authorities have successfully launched the surveillance camera-based Traffic Regulation and Citation System (TRACS), popularly known as e-challan system, the implementation of even Phase I of the Karachi Safe City Project is still two months away from its formal launch, it emerged on Thursday.

At a meeting held at Chief Minister House, Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah announced that Phase I of the Rs200 million Karachi Safe City Project would be launched within two months as technology installations had been completed and trial phases were underway.

He also directed the immediate recruitment of expert staff to ensure that the project becomes operational within the next two months.

The project aims to enhance public safety through real-time monitoring of critical areas, with 43 poles already installed and cameras transmitting live footage to the Central Police Office (CPO) Command and Control Centre.

The first phase covers the high-security 'Red Zone' and airport corridor, while subsequent phases will expand to other areas, including districts South, East, Korangi and Malir.

The project is part of a larger initiative to transform Karachi into a technology-driven metropolis, with features like facial recognition, automatic number plate recognition, and intelligent traffic systems.

Presiding over a meeting at Chief Minister House, the CM directed the Sindh Safe City Authority (SSCA) to start preparations for Safe City projects for Hyderabad and Sukkur. "I want you to submit a comprehensive plan with a timeline so that it can be approved".

The meeting, held at CM House, was attended by Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar, CM's Special Assistant Ali Rashid, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Home Secretary Iqbal Memon, IG Police Javed Alam Odho, Chairman of P&D Najam Shah, Excise Secretary Saleem Rajput, Local Government Secretary Rafi Qureshi, DG Safe Cities Authorities Sarfraz Nawaz and DG Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Salman Shah.

A press statement issued from CM House said that the chief minister directed the immediate recruitment of expert staff to ensure that the project becomes operational within the next two months. "The meeting served as a critical review of the project's transition from construction to active surveillance and law enforcement," the statement added.

Operational readiness

Phase I of the Karachi Safe City project, which includes the installation of 1,300 cameras across 300 pole sites, 18 Point of Presence (PoP) sites, and 23 Emergency Response Vehicles (ERVs), is now in the "acceptance trial phase".

To prevent "operational paralysis", the chief minister approved the temporary contractual appointment of 34 specialised technical and administrative experts.

Budget re-appropriation

The chief minister approved the revised budget of Rs200 million for the Phase-I of the project.

While the total envelope remains unchanged, funds were re-allocated to prioritise human resources and transportation/patrolling to meet immediate operational needs.

"The SSCA will temporarily operate from the Central Police Office (CPO), where Inspector General of Police Javed Odho is committed to providing a dedicated floor to maintain close coordination with the existing Command & Control functions."

DG SSCA Sarfraz Nawaz briefed the chief minister that the technical component of the project, including servers, video walls, and fibre optic networks, was completed on schedule as of December 17, 2025.

He noted that the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system was currently being refined and will be ready for a live demonstration of Facial Recognition (FR) and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) within two weeks.

"The safety of Karachi is non-negotiable. We are moving from the project phase to a fully functional Authority," said that chief minister, directing the SSCA to conduct necessity-based hiring.

The chief minister formed a committee to hire technical experts for the project from the open market, strictly based on merit and need.

The chief minister also noted that surveys for Safe City projects in Hyderabad and Sukkur, as well as smart camera installations at provincial entry and exit points, had been completed by the National Radio & Telecommunication Corporation (NRTC).